

Message Text

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E.O.11652:N/A
TAGS: ACON
SUBJECT: UN ADMINISTRATION: COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES HOLDS
HEARINGS ON DOCUMENTATION PROBLEMS

1. SUMMARY: THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES MET APRIL 26 AND 28 TO CONSIDER PROBLEMS PERTAINING TO DOCUMENTATION WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM. REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE STATISTICAL OFFICE, ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN BRANCH, THE CENTER FOR TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS (CTNC), AS WELL AS ASYG CORDOVEZ DISCUSSED DIFFICULTIES IN PRODUCING AND DISSEMINATING UN DOCUMENTS ON TIME. THE SESSION WAS ORGANIZED AS A PRELUDE TO THE MAY 8-12 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES. END SUMMARY

2. ASYG CORDOVEZ PINPOINTED TWO REASONS FOR THE TARDY PRODUCTION OF UN DOCUMENTS: (A) A "REPORTING SYNDROME" WHICH HE DEFINED AS RESULTING FROM MEMBER STATES BEING UNABLE TO ADOPT RESTRAINTS ON REQUESTS FOR DOCUMENTS AND, (B) A LACK OF DRAFTING EXPERTISE ON THE PART OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAFTING DOCUMENTS.

3. WITH RESPECT TO THE "REPORTING SYNDROME", CORDOVEZ SAID THAT THE NUMEROUS REQUESTS FOR SYG REPORTS ARISING FROM GA AND ECOSOC RESOLUTIONS LEADS TO DUPLICATION OF UNCLASSIFIED

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WORK BECAUSE OF A LACK OF COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF REQUESTS. IN ORDER TO COMBAT THIS PROBLEM, ECOSOC INITIATED THIS YEAR A POLICY OF CIRCULATING A LIST OF ALL THE DOCUMENTS IT HAS BEEN REQUESTED TO PRODUCE AT ITS ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION IN JANUARY. CORDOVEZ LAMENTED THAT OF THE 118 DOCUMENTS REQUESTED FOR THE SUMMER SESSION NOT ONE REQUEST FOR A DELETION HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM A MEMBER STATE. THIS FACT BUTTRESSED HIS VIEW THAT THE "ESSENCE OF THE DOCUMENTATION PROBLEM WAS AT THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL."

4. AS FOR DRAFTING EXPERTISE, CORDOVEZ OPINED THAT WHEN, FOR EXAMPLE, A YOUNG ECONOMIST IS CONSIDERED FOR EMPLOYMENT BY A SUBSTANTIVE SECTION IT SHOULD BE DETERMINED WHETHER HE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A GOOD DRAFTER.

5. US (CUNNINGHAM) ASKED WHETHER THE SECRETARIAT HAS PROVIDED RECOMMENDATIONS ON POSSIBLE CONSOLIDATION OR ELIMINATION OF DUPLICATE DOCUMENTS; COULD THE UN TRAINING SYSTEM PROVIDE TRAINING IN DRAFTING SKILLS; AND IF IT MIGHT NOT BE USEFUL TO PUBLICLY RECOGNIZE THOSE UNITS THAT PRODUCE DRAFTS IN TIME AND THOSE WHO DO NOT.

6. IN RESPONSE TO THE FIRST QUESTION CORDOVEZ SAID THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE SECRETARIAT TO PROVIDE SUCH INFORMATION AND THAT IT SHOULD HAVE DONE SO IN THE PAST. AS FOR DRAFTING SKILLS, HE SAID THAT TRAINING IN THE RULES FOR DRAFTING UN DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE PART OF THE INDUCTION PROCESS OF EVERY NEW STAFF MEMBER. HE NOTED THAT THE PROBLEM OF DRAFTING SKILLS WAS COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT ALTHOUGH MOST DRAFTS ARE IN ENGLISH, MANY OF THE DRAFTERS ARE NOT NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH. HE SAID THE COMMITTEE SHOULD RECOMMEND DRAFTING
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SKILLS IMPROVEMENTS. AS FOR IDENTIFYING THOSE UNITS WHO PRODUCE DRAFTS IN TIME, HE SAID THE CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, PROJECTIONS AND POLICIES, STATISTICAL COMMISSION, AND POPULATION COMMISSION HAD GOOD RECORDS.

7. USSR (GRODSKY) COMPLAINED THAT CORDOVEZ HAD NOT BEEN SPECIFIC IN HIS PRESENTATION IN THAT CORDOVEZ HAD NOT GIVEN A BREAKDOWN ON THE NUMBER OF PAGES PRODUCED BY ECOSOC AND ON THE NUMBER OF MAN-MONTHS OF WORK USED. FRANCE (DERRE) SAID THE UNDP HAD OFTEN EXPLAINED ITS FAILURE TO OBSERVE THE SIX-WEEK RULE FOR DISTRIBUTION OF DOCUMENTATION BY BLAMING ECOSOC'S ABILITY TO CONTROL REPRODUCTION PRIORITIES. CANADA (HAHN) SUGGESTED THAT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BE NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE IF DOCUMENTS WERE GOING TO ARRIVE LATE IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT CONSIDER WHETHER THE DOCUMENTS IN QUESTION COULD BE POSTPONED FOR A YEAR.

8. CORDOVEZ RESPONDED TO THE USSR BY STATING THAT ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT HAVE SUCH INFORMATION AT HAND, HE KNEW THE 118 DOCUMENTS FOR THE SUMMER SESSION WOULD CONSIST OF ROUGHLY 3700 PAGES. ECOSOC WOULD ASSIST THE CPC IN ANY PRODUCTIVITY STUDY. HE FELT UNDP BLAMED ECOSOC FOR ITS DIFFICULTIES WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION.

9. SIMON GOLDBERG, DIRECTOR OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE,

STRESSED IN HIS PRESENTATION THAT THE PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS IN HIS UNIT FOLLOWED A TIGHT, WELL PLANNED SCHEDULE. HE SAID THAT BECAUSE OF THE SIZEABLE NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS NEEDED FOR A SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION, THE STATISTICAL OFFICE BEGINS PLANNING IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PRECEDING SESSION HAS

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ENDED. BECAUSE OF THE TECHNICAL NATURE OF THE DOCUMENTS AND ALSO BECAUSE THE 33RD GA WILL HAVE EDITORIAL AND REPRODUCTION PRIORITY FOR ITS REPORTS, DOCUMENTS FOR THE FEBRUARY 1979 SESSION WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF CONFERENCE SERVICES BEFORE SEPTEMBER.

10. GOLDBERG PROCEEDED TO OUTLINE THE SCHEDULE FOLLOWED IN PRODUCING DOCUMENTS, DETAILING EVERY STEP OF THE ONE AND ONE-QUARTER YEAR PROCESS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT AT ALL STAGES THERE WAS CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MANAGERS AND SUBSTANTIVE WRITERS OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE. THE STANDARDS AND DEADLINES FOR DOCUMENTS WERE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION AT THE INITIAL STAGES BUT ONCE THE GUIDELINES AND SCHEDULE HAD BEEN SET IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THE DRAFTERS WOULD MEET THE MUTUALLY AGREED UPON DEADLINES. GOLDBERG SAID THAT THE PAPERS WERE USUALLY WELL DRAFTED BECAUSE THE DRAFTERS REALIZED THAT BECAUSE OF THE TECHNICAL NATURE OF THE MATERIAL A MINIMUM AMOUNT OF EDITING SHOULD HAVE TO BE DONE BY CONFERENCE SERVICES. HE CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT THE MOTTO OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE WAS "A GOOD PAPER ON TIME IS MORE VALUABLE THAN A HIGHLY POLISHED PAPER TOO LATE."

11. US ASKED HOW THE STATISTICAL OFFICE AVOIDED THE
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"REPORTING SYNDROME" OF DUPLICATE REQUESTS AND HOW IT MAINTAINED SUCH HIGH STANDARDS OF INTERNAL DISCIPLINE

AND EDITORIAL QUALITY. FRANCE INQUIRED AS TO THE FEASIBILITY OF PRODUCING AN ORIGINAL DRAFT IN THE DRAFTER'S NATIVE TONGUE IF IT WERE OTHER THAN ENGLISH.

12. GOLDBERG RESPONDED THAT HIS UNIT WAS ABLE TO AVOID DUPLICATION OF REPORTS BECAUSE THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION ITSELF SCREENS THE REQUESTS FOR REPORTS IN ORDER TO HOLD DUPLICATION TO A MINIMUM. HE SAID INTERNAL DISCIPLINE WAS MAINTAINED BECAUSE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE UNIT WHICH RESULTED FROM FREQUENT MEETINGS BETWEEN MANAGERS AND DRAFTERS. THIS EXCELLENT WORKING RELATIONSHIP EXTENDED TO THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION. AS A GROUP OF EXPERTS IT UNDERSTOOD WHEN THE STATISTICAL OFFICE COULD NOT PRODUCE A DOCUMENT BECAUSE OF LACK OF INPUT FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES. WITH RESPECT TO EDITORIAL STANDARDS, HE SAID HIS OFFICE HAD A NUMBER OF GOOD WRITERS AS WELL AS ONE OR TWO PEOPLE WHO SERVED AS EDITORS. GOLDBERG SAID ALTHOUGH ENGLISH WAS THE PREFERENCE OF STAFF MEMBERS, IF SOMEONE WANTED TO DRAFT IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE HE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO SO.

13. MRS. SOL NAHON, OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN BRANCH, GAVE A LENGTHY APOLOGIA FOR THE DOCUMENTS PROBLEMS ENDEMIC TO HER UNIT. SHE BLAMED THE PROBLEMS ON, INTER ALIA, ITS BROAD INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM, THE FACT IT MUST PRODUCE DOCUMENTS FOR THE GA, ECOSOC AND THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, AND UNDUE REQUESTS BY THE EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT. WITH RESPECT TO THE LATTER, SHE COMPLAINED THAT THE EDITORIAL PEOPLE HAD TOO MUCH FREEDOM IN REVISING OR ASKING FOR MORE PAGES IN THE REPORTS HER UNIT PRODUCED. NAHON AVOIDED ANSWERING UNCLASSIFIED

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SPECIFICALLY ANY QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO HOW THE WOMEN'S BRANCH COULD IMPLEMENT BETTER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES TO COPE WITH ITS PROBLEMS.

14. GUSTAVE FEISSEL OF THE CTNC TOLD THE COMMITTEE THAT BECAUSE OF THE CENTER'S NEWNESS AND BECAUSE OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE OF TNC STUDIES, THE CENTER WAS JUST ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES ON DOCUMENTS PRODUCTION. HE ADDED THAT ONE OF THE CENTER'S FUNCTIONS, TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM ON TNCs TO ASSIST GOVERNMENTS, WAS AN ONGOING PROCESS WITHOUT DEADLINES. IN RESPONSE TO A US QUESTION ON WHAT CONTROLS EXISTED TO GET DOCUMENTS OUT ON TIME, FEISSEL SAID THE CENTER ACTS ON THE ESTABLISHED DEADLINES FOR DOCUMENTS. IN MOST CASES A STUDY TAKES UP TO TWO YEARS. FEISSEL SAID MANY DOCUMENTS PRODUCED BY TNC ARE FOR GOVERNMENTS AND ARE NOT SUBJECT TO DEADLINES OF THE SORT THAT AFFECT DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR MEETINGS. HE OFFERED NO FURTHER SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON HOW MANAGERIAL DISCIPLINE WAS

MAINTAINED.

15. IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
WILL BEGIN ITS SUBSTANTIVE SESSION ON MONDAY, MAY 8, AT
10:30 A.M. YOUNG

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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